

Genesis 39 – Joseph in Potiphar’s House

This chapter contrasts the immoral character of Judah (38) with the moral character of Joseph, and his encounter with Potiphar’s wife. Judah’s lack of integrity resulted in family strife and deception. Here we see how Joseph’s integrity and wise choices reflect his godly character. His faithfulness will be rewarded with blessings for him and his family. The stories of both men are vivid reminders that God works through us, not because of us, but despite us.

Read 39:1-6

“Pharaoh” was the general name for all the kings of Egypt. It was a title like “king” or “president.”

V. 2-3, We often complain to God that He put us in a terrible or difficult place. But God’s will is that we trust Him to bless us and make us successful (as *He* measures success) wherever we are.

V. 4-6 - Joseph rose to the top, but it took quite a while. Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery (Genesis 37:2). He was 30 when Pharaoh promoted him (Genesis 41:46), and had been in prison for two years before that (Genesis 41:1). So, he was in Potiphar’s house for 11 years. It took 11 years for the full measure of God’s blessing to be accomplished in Joseph’s life.

11 years seems like a long time. Many think good things from God must obviously come quickly. However God also allows good things to develop slowly. This is an essential truth to remember: It takes many years for an acorn to become a mighty oak, while a weed grows overnight. Look up: James 5:7-8, Psalm 37:7-9

Read 39:7-10

This wealthy woman’s advances must have enticed Joseph. It reminds us that when we face strong temptations, other have faced the same. Satan wants you to think your temptation is unique; that no one you know could understand what you are going through. But there is no temptation that has overtaken us except what is common among men (1 Corinthians 10:13).

v. 9 - All sin is against God. Psalm 51:4. Joseph’s response (“... *against God*”) is a reminder that sexual sin is not just between two consenting adults. It is an act of direct disobedience against God. Look up: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 Also, for Joseph personally, it was an expression of gratitude to God. Joseph was aware that his success was because “the Lord was with him.” And it may have been because he believed that he had a role to play in God’s plan. Dedication to God’s calling will enable the servant of God to resist temptation. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Read 39:11-20

Joseph fled. To know when to fight and when to flee are of great importance in the Christian life. Some temptations must be addressed, resisted, and thus overcome; from others we must flee. Those who attempt to compromise, or who accept the tension in a scenario such as Joseph’s have already failed. 2 Timothy 2:22; James 4:7.

How is Joseph rewarded for his integrity?

The parallels to the troubles with his brothers are striking. God raised him to a place of prominence, he was faithful, his faithfulness caused resentment and created enemies, he was stripped of his cloak and thrown into a pit, and his cloak was used as evidence in a false report of him.

Read 39:21-23

Although he was in jail, once again, Joseph is raised to a position of prominence because “the Lord was with him.” Obedience to God may not lead to immediate success in the world, but God will always remain with us.

The account of Joseph closely parallels the account of Israel in Egypt. Initially, like Joseph, Israel was welcomed and the nation prospered. Egypt reacted with resentment and threw Israel down to slavery and hard labor. But through Moses, Israel was raised again until the Egyptians realized that the God of Israel held their lives in His hands. During this time, like Joseph, Israel would learn that she would be tempted to compromise, but if she wished to fulfill God’s destiny for her, she must remain obedient.

*“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.
In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” – John 16:33*